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EPA DRAMATICALLY REDUCES POLLUTION FROM HEAVY-DUTY TRUCKS AND BUSES; CUTS SULFUR LEVELS IN DIESEL FUEL

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To protect public health and the environment, the Clinton-Gore Administration today announced a major action that will provide the cleanest running heavy-duty trucks and buses in history. These vehicles will be 95 percent cleaner than today's trucks and buses. To ensure cleaner-running trucks and buses, today's action also requires that sulfur in diesel fuel be reduced by 97 percent. By addressing diesel fuel and engines together as a single system, this action will produce the clean-air equivalent of eliminating air pollution from 13 million of today's trucks.

"Anyone who has ever driven behind a large truck or bus is familiar with the smell of diesel fuel and the clouds of thick exhaust emissions. Today's action will dramatically cut harmful air pollution by up to 95 percent. New trucks and buses run as cleanly as those running on natural gas." said EPA Administrator Carol M. Browner. "The Clinton-Gore Administration already has produced the toughest tailpipe standards ever for passenger vehicles. This action takes the next, giant step to achieve cleaner air and protect the health of all Americans. One huge benefit of today's action will be the greatest reduction in harmful emissions of particulate matter, or soot, ever achieved from cars and trucks."

An older, dirtier diesel vehicle can emit almost eight tons of air pollution each year. EPA has determined that diesel exhaust is likely to cause lung cancer in humans. This action will reduce 2.6 million tons of smog-causing nitrogen oxide emissions each year once the program is fully implemented. Emissions of soot, or particulate matter, will be reduced by nearly 110,000 tons each year. As a result, today's action will prevent 8,300 premature deaths, 5,500 cases of chronic bronchitis, and 17,600 cases of acute bronchitis in children. It will also avoid over 360,000 asthma attacks and more than 386,000 cases of respiratory symptoms in asthmatic children annually. The action will prevent 1.5 million lost work days, 7,100 hospital admissions and 2,400 emergency room visits for asthma every year.

To date, most diesel trucks and buses have not used pollution control devices similar to those used on cars for the last 25 years. To enable modern pollution-control technology to be effective on trucks and buses, however, diesel fuel must be significantly cleaner than it is today. EPA will reduce the sulfur content of highway diesel fuel from its current level of 500 parts per million to 15 parts per million – a 97 percent reduction.

Significant lead time has been provided in the rule for the introduction of new cleaner fuel into the marketplace to ensure no disruptions in fuel supplies and reduce costs. Engine manufacturers will have flexibility to meet the new standards through a phase-in approach between 2007 and 2010. The fuel provisions will go into effect in June 2006. The program includes various flexible approaches, including additional time for some refiners if required and special provisions for small oil refiners.

EPA estimates the costs of this program will raise costs of new vehicles by $1,200 to $1,900 per vehicle (new trucks cost up to $150,000 and buses cost up to $250,000). EPA estimates diesel fuel costs could increase by four to five cents per gallon. The benefits of the action outweigh costs by 16 to one.

Last December, the Clinton Administration announced the cleanest tailpipe standards ever for passenger vehicles. Those standards for the first time ever ensured that SUVs, minivans and pick-up trucks would run as cleanly as other passenger vehicles. That action, as well as today's, will ensure that every single new vehicle on the American road in the future will be up to 95 percent cleaner than all vehicles now on the road. The final rule and related documents are available at: http://www.epa.gov/otaq/diesel.htm

R-196 # # #